

LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

Author of "Harry Lorrequer," "Jack Hinton the Guardsman," "Charles O'Malley the Irish Dragoon," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.—Continued.

Tell them the same thing, not once or twice, or even ten, but fifty times, and don't vary very much even the way you tell it. Go on repeating your platitudes, and by the time you find you are cursing your own stupid persistence, you may swear you have made a convert to your opinions. If you are bent on variety, and must indulge it, ring your change on the man who brought these views before them—yourself, but beyond that never fear. O'Connell, who had variety at will for his own countrymen, never tried it in England; he knew better. The chawbacca that we wear at are not always in smoke-trocks, take my word for it; they many of them wear wide brimmed hats and broadcloth, and sit above the gangway. Ay, sir," cried he, warming with the theme: "once I can get my countrymen fully awakened to the fact of who and what are the men who rule them. I'll ask for no Catholic Associations, or Repeal Committees, or Nationalist Clubs; the card-house of British supremacy will tumble of itself; there will be no conflict, but simply submission."

"We're a long day's journey from these convictions, I suspect," said Kearney, doubtfully.

"Not so far, perhaps, as you think. Do you remark how little the English press deal in abuse of us to what was once their custom? They have not, I admit, come down to civility; but they don't deride us in the old fashion, nor tell us, as I once saw, that we are intellectually and physically stamped with inferiority. If it was true, Mr. Kearney, it was stupid to tell it to us."

"I think we could do better than dwell upon these things."

"I deny that: deny it in toto. The moment you forget in your dealings with the English man, the cheap estimate he entertains, not alone of your brains and your skill, but of your resolution, your persistence, your strong will—ay, your very integrity—that moment, I say, places him in a position to treat you as something below him. Bear in mind, however, how he is striving to regard you, and it's your own fault if you're not his equal, and something more perhaps. There was a man more than the master of them all, and his name was Edmund Burke; and how did they treat him? How insolently did they behave to O'Connell in the House till he put his heel on them! Were they generous to Shell? Were they just to Plunkett? No, no. The element that they decay in our people they know they have not got, and they'd like to crush the race, when they cannot extinguish the quality."

Donagan had so excited himself now that he walked up and down the room, his voice ringing with emotion, and his arms wildly tossing in all the extravagance of passion. "This is from Joe Atlee," said Kearney, as he tore open the envelope:

"DEAR DICK—I cannot account for the madness that seems to have seized you, except that Dan Donagan, the most rabid dog I know has bitten you. If so, for Heaven's sake have the piece cut out at once, and use the strongest cautery of common sense, if you know of any one who has a little to spare. I only remembered yesterday that I ought to have told you I had sheltered Dan in our rooms, but I can already detect that you have made his acquaintance. He is not a bad fellow. He is sincere in his opinions, and incorruptible, if that be the name for a man who, if bought to-morrow, would not be worth sixpence to his owner."

"Though I resigned all respect for my own good sense in telling it, I was obliged to let H. E. know the contents of your despatch; and then, as I saw he had never heard of Kilgobbin or the great Kearney family, I told more lies of your estates property, your county station, your influence generally, and your abilities individually, than the fee-simple of your property, converted into masses, will see me safe through purgatory; and I have consequently baited the trap that has caught myself; for, persuaded by my eloquent advocacy of you all, H. E. has written to Walpole to make certain inquiries concerning you, which, if satisfactory, he, Walpole, will

put himself in communication with you, as to the extent and the mode to which the government will support you. I think I can see Dan Donagan's fine hand in that part of your note which fore-shadows a threat, and hints that the Walpole story would, if published abroad, do enormous damage to the ministry. This, let me assure you, is a fatal error, and a blunder which could only be committed by an outsider in political life. The days are long past since a scandal could smash an administration; and we are so strong now that arson or forgery could not hurt, and I don't think that infanticide would affect us."

"If you are really bent on this wild exploit, you should see Walpole and confer with him. You don't ask well, but you write worse; so avoid correspondence, and do all your indiscretions verbally. Be angry, if you like, with my candor, but follow my counsel."

"See him and show him, if you are able, that, all questions of nationality apart, he may count upon your vote; that there are certain impracticable and impossible conceits in politics—like repeal, subdivision of land, restoration of the confiscated estates, and such like—on which Irishmen insist on being free to talk balderdash and air their patriotism; but that, rightfully considered, they are as harmless and mean just as little as a discussion on the Digamma or a debate on perpetual motion. The stupid Tories could never be brought to see this. Like genuine dolts, they would have an army of supporters one-minded with them in everything. We know better, and hence we buy the Radical vote by a little coquetting with communism, and the model working-man, and the rebel by an occasional jail delivery, and the papist by a sop to the Holy Father. Bear in mind, Dick—and it is the grand secret of political life—it takes all sorts of people to make "a party." When you have thoroughly digested this aphorism you are fit to start in the world."

"If you are not so full of what I am sure you would call your "legitimate ambitions," I'd like to tell you the glorious life we lead in this place. Disraeli talks of "the well-sustained splendor of their stately lives," and it is just the phrase for an existence in which all the appliances to ease and enjoyment are supplied by a sort of magic, that never shows its machinery, nor lets you hear the sound of its working. The saddle-horses know when I want to ride by the same instinct that makes the butler give me the exact wine I wish at my dinner. And so on throughout the day, "the sustained splendor" being an ever-present luxuriousness that I drink in with a thirst that knows no slaking."

"I have made a hit with H. E., and, from copying some rather muddled-headed dispatches, I am now promoted to writing short skeleton sermons on politics, which, duly filled out and fattened with official nutriment, will one day astonish the Irish Office, and make one of the Nestors of bureaucracy exclaim: "See how Danesbury has got up the Irish question!"

"I have a charming collaborateur, my lord's niece, who was acting as his private secretary up to the time of my arrival, and whose explanation of a variety of things I found to be so essential that, from being at first in the continual necessity of seeking her out, I have now arrived at a point at which we write in the same room, and pass our mornings in the library till luncheon. She is stunningly handsome, as tall as the Greek cousin, and with a stately grace of manner and a cold dignity of demeanor I'd give my heart's blood to subdue to a mood of womanly tenderness and dependence. Up to this, my position is that of a very humble courtier in presence of a queen, and she takes care that by no momentary forgetfulness shall I lose sight of the "situation."

"She is engaged, they say, to be married to Walpole; but as I have not heard that he is heir-apparent, or has even the reversion to the crown of Spain, I cannot perceive what the contract means."

"I rode out with her to-day by special invitation, or permission—which was it?—and in the few words that passed between us she asked me if I had long known Mr. Walpole, and put her horse into a canter without waiting for my answer."

"With H. E. I can talk away freely, and without constraint. I am never very sure that he does not know the things he questions me on better than

myself—a practice some of his order rather cultivate; but, on the whole, our intercourse is easy. I know he is not a little puzzled about me, and I intend that he should remain so."

"When you have seen and spoken with Walpole, write me what has taken place between you; and though I am fully convinced that what you intend is unmitigated folly, I see so many difficulties in the way, such obstacles, and such almost impossibilities to be overcome, that I think Fate will be more merciful to you than your ambitions, and spare you, by an early defeat, from a crushing disappointment."

"Had you ambitioned to be a governor of a colony, a bishop, or a queen's messenger—they are the only irresponsible people I can think of—I might have helped you; but this conceit to be a Parliament man is such irredeemable folly, one is powerless to deal with it."

"At all events, your time is not worth much, nor is your public character of a very grove importance. Give them both, then, freely to the effort, but do not let it cost you money, nor let Donagan persuade you that you are one of those men who can make patriotism self-supporting."

"H. E. hints at a very confidential mission on which he desires to employ me; and though I should leave this place now with such regret, and a more tender sorrow than I could teach you to comprehend, I shall hold myself at his order for Japan if he wants me. Meanwhile, write to me what takes place with Walpole, and put your faith firmly in the good-will and efficiency of Yours truly,

"JOE ATLEE."

"If you think of taking Donagan down with you to Kilgobbin, I ought to tell you that it would be a mistake. Women invariably dislike him, and he would do you no credit."

Dick Kearney who had begun to read this letter aloud, saw himself constrained to continue, and went on boldly, without stop or hesitation, to the last word.

"I am very grateful to you, Mr. Kearney," said Donagan, "for this mark of trustfulness, and I'm not in the least sore about what Joe has said of me."

"He is not over complimentary to myself," said Kearney, and the irritation he felt was not to be concealed.

"There's one passage in this letter," said the other, thoughtfully, "well worth all the stress he lays on it. He tells you never to forget it takes all sorts of men to make a party." Nothing can more painfully prove the fact than that we need Joe Atlee among ourselves! And it is true, Mr. Kearney," said he, sternly, "treason must now, to have any chance at all, be many-handed. We want not only all sorts of men, but in all sorts of places; and at tables where rebel opinions dared not be boldly announced and defended we want people who coquet with felony, and get men to talk over treason with little if any ceremony. Joe can do this—he can write, and, what is better, sing you a Fenian ballad, and if he sees he has made a mistake, he can quiz himself and his song as cavalierly as he has sung it. And now, on my solemn oath, I say it, I don't know that anything worse has befallen us than the fact that there are such men as Joe Atlee among us, and that we need them—ay, sir, we need them!"

"This is brief enough, at any rate," said Kearney, as he broke open the second letter:

"DUBLIN CASTLE, Wednesday Evening."

"DEAR SIR—Would you do me the great favor to call on me here at your earliest convenient moment? I am still an invalid, and confined to a sofa, or would ask for permission to meet you at your chambers."

"Believe me, yours faithfully,
"CECIL WALPOLE."

"That cannot be delayed, I suppose?" said Kearney, in the tone of a question.

"Certainly not."

"I'll go up by the night mail. You'll remain where you are, and where I hope you feel you are with a welcome."

"I feel it, sir—I feel it more than I can say." And his face was blood-red as he spoke.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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